

## Pronouns in the Classroom

*In social interactions, we tend to assume and ascribe gender, in part through the pronouns (e.g., she, he, they) we use to refer to others. But our assumptions do not always match how people identify. As an instructor, one way to create a classroom environment that is welcoming to a broad range of gender identities and expressions is to be deliberate about your own personal pronoun use and to invite all students to be careful about their assumptions and language as well.*

**What are some practices** that can help instructors avoid making erroneous assumptions about gender in the classroom -- and foster a space where misgendering is less likely? Some options to consider:

- Check your student roster (on Wolverine Access) and familiarize yourself with the pronouns of students who have chosen to designate them.
- On a background questionnaire, provide a space for students to identify their pronouns as well as the name they use.
- In spoken introductions, create an opportunity for students to identify their pronouns if they choose (e.g., You might say something like, "Share your name and let us know how we ought to address and refer to you; this can be a chance to tell us your pronouns, how to pronounce your name, whether there's a nickname you prefer or really object to, etc.").
- In larger groups, model and invite a practice of referring to everyone with the gender-neutral pronoun "they."
- During the first few classes (or throughout the term in large classes) ask students to wear nametags or display name plates and give them the option to include a pronoun sticker, such as those depicted below.
- Explain to students your reasons for attending to pronouns, among other inclusive teaching practices.
- Practice pronoun usage that is not familiar to you, and acknowledge to students that it can be difficult to adjust to grammatical forms or pronoun usage that feel new or are unfamiliar.

For more on creating gender-inclusive classrooms, see the CRLT Blog at <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/node/93302>.



*If you'd like to supply these stickers for your students, they are available to instructors for free through U-M's Spectrum Center: [spectrumcenter@umich.edu](mailto:spectrumcenter@umich.edu), [spectrumcenter.umich.edu](http://spectrumcenter.umich.edu), (734) 763-4186.*